

May 12, 2003

via e-mail

Dear Representative Woolsey,

I am a ClearChannel news employee who attended part of this afternoon's hearing at Dominican University. I attended, however, as a private citizen. I chose not to address you and Commissioner Copps at that time for personal reasons - plus, you had a spectacular turnout with a great deal of valuable input. Some who spoke were more objective than others, but all were genuine in their concerns.

In the time I was there I did not hear anyone raise concerns about this issues' impact on local economies. A further consolidation of media ownership will exacerbate the problem of a cash flow from local communities nationwide to various corporate headquarters. Much of this is directly attributable to lost jobs. I am most familiar with the radio side so I will focus there.

When you have multiple stations owned by a company which chooses to fill air-time with voice tracks recorded in other cities, the result is at least one less local resident drawing a paycheck. An income which would have been turned over multiple times in each local economy. Multiply this by several day-parts per station and the numbers increase greatly. In the case of a company which owns six stations in one market, each station in the past would employ in the neighborhood of five full-time announcers as well as several part-timers. Some less, some more but this is a fair average. When that is reduced to a live morning show and everything else voice-tracked for each station, the community has lost twenty or more full time wages.

The corporations will argue these numbers.

✓ Not all stations were fully staffed in the past. True, but in most markets the stations under discussion were staffed around the clock. That is no longer the case.

✓ Not all air-shifts are now voice-tracked by out-of-townners. True, some are tracked by local employees. But those employees, in most cases, are no longer full-time employees. There are paid less than the same full-time shift drew in the past. They work either as a part-timer or as a contract employee. Or they don't work. And there is usually no health insurance.

✓ We are able to put more money into the pockets of the remaining air staff. Highly suspect. The amount which would have been paid to four, five or six other full-time staffers would have had a far greater economic impact locally.

✓ Economic sense dictates that stations operate in this manner. To do otherwise would mean financial ruin. Possibly, but much of that economic concern feeds directly from the corporate leveraged situation after gobbling up smaller blocks of stations over the years.

Much has been made of the trouble emergency officials had in getting out word of a late night toxic spill in the Dakota's. All stations in that market were owned by one company and in the early

morning hours, the stations were running on automation. That community - like hundreds across the country - remains in a less immediate, but more deadly long term danger because of the lost jobs at those stations and the economic impact for communities like it across the United States.

One personal side note - With so many local stations taking voice tracks from other markets, and with few stations employing anyone in the traditional overnight, "break-into the business" shift, what will be on the radio in 15 years? Where will future broadcasters train and learn?

Please add my somewhat strident voice to those in opposition to any further media consolidation.

Richard G. Smith
206 Oleander Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903
415-492-8662

cc: FCC Commissioner Michael Copps